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## CHINA AND THE WESTERN POWERS.

BY F. CRISPI, FORMERLY PRIME MINISTER OF ITALY.

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THE first attempts to civilize China started from Italy, the birthplace of more than one civilization. The Italians, having inherited the Greek and the Latin spirit, defended the intellectual conquests they had achieved throughout the ages against the barbarians a long time before they were able to constitute themselves into a free and united nation. Marco Polo revealed China to Europe; Martino Martini was the first to describe it graphically in 1655 through his "*Atlas Sinensis*;" and the first missionaries to the Far East were Italians, who, whilst respecting the external forms of the Chinese rites, preached the Christian faith (insinuating that the germs of it were already contained in the Chinese religious codes), and propagated the principles of Italian science and civilization. Some unfortunate disagreements between the rulers of the country and the Dominican friars resulted in the expulsion of all the missionaries from China; and Latin influence was nearly entirely replaced by the influence of Northern Europe, since Holland, England and Russia did not then mix religious propaganda with their mercantile and colonial enterprises. But China was practically closed to Europe for a century; and force of arms alone succeeded, in the period from 1841 to 1887, in re-opening its doors.

The treaty of Nanking (1842) opened the ports of Canton, Amoy, Foochow and Ning-Po to British commerce, gave Hong-Kong to England, and imposed an indemnity to the amount of twenty-one millions of dollars on China. During the fifty years that followed, we had the treaty of Tien-tsin in 1858 (ratified at Peking two years later, when England and France had sacked the Imperial Summer Palace); the Anglo-French treaties of 1860-1861; the agreement of Chefoo (1886); the treaty of peace be-

tween France and China on the 9th of June, 1885, after the struggle for Tongking; the additional agreement of 1887; the commercial agreement of Chung-King, in February, 1890—and all this so as to open new ports to Europeans; to declare and guarantee a free opportunity to Christian propaganda, with the recognition of the right of missionaries to possess houses and lands independently of the so-called “European concessions,” which right had before always been refused to laymen; to sanction and enlarge the principle of extra-territoriality not for the diplomatic representatives only, but for all Europeans; to abolish the transit duty, which each province had the right to impose on goods; and to recognize the right of European nations to navigate and transport goods along the two great river-ways also, which, for a total length of over six thousand miles, lead from the Yellow Sea into the heart of the immense Chinese continent.

This long series of compulsory acts on the part of Europe gave rise to a reaction in China not only ethical and religious, but political and national. The different secret societies, the result of native fanaticism, grew more powerful, increased in number and became very bold. The Chinese chronicles are full of stories of bloodthirsty uprisings against strangers, accompanied by ferocious pillage and robbery, directed mainly against the mission-houses and the missionaries. All the prejudices that fanaticism could suggest to stir up an ignorant and barbaric population were set at work, some ridiculous, other childish; but they all and always had most terrible results.

In 1894, the war with Japan broke out, and, like a flash of lightning, rapidly came to an end. But of this war Russia, Germany, England and France gathered the fruits, after they had arrested the victorious young Empire on the way to Peking.

After four or five years of territorial occupation, a new general rising has broken out against Europe, which has been accused of interfering with the Dynasty, the Dynasty being considered as having been powerless to prevent disturbances which might prove the prelude to the disruption of China. Whether this be a national revolution, or only a war of fanaticism, the historians of the future will say. At the present moment, it is simply the cause which has provoked the intervention of the civilized Powers in the affairs of China. Was this intervention justified? Was it imposed by duty?

The Chinese Empire is an anachronism : its insensate obstinacy in resisting any change looking toward modern civilization is unparalleled. The cruelties of Islamism, although so much later in origin, the Mussulman fanaticism, the recent slaughters of the Armenians, still present to our mind, all fade into nothing by comparison. Turkey is acting on the defensive and for self-preservation ; her diplomacy, cleverly turning European rivalries to advantage, is endeavoring to preserve the throne of the Sultan for the Turks, knowing quite well that any change means death. China, on the other hand, is an obstacle in the way of commerce and of the world-civilization. From the day when China stood up in arms against Japan, the historical contrast between Chinese barbarity and the civilization of the world at large presented itself as a phenomenon which, at the dawn of a new century, was nothing less than amazing.

Japan gave obvious proofs of understanding that the reason of her existence and her destiny are very closely connected with the necessity of a change within herself. Whether Japan has really understood this fact, or has only appeared to do so, cannot at the present moment be affirmed, although it would seem difficult for her now to draw back from the course she has already taken ; but, whatever may be true of Japan, eternal immobility and unchangeableness are the characteristics of China. China is still to-day what it was in the most remote past ; it has learned nothing from contact with civilized peoples, either in war or commerce. The preaching of Christianity for centuries within Chinese borders has been almost fruitless. The one sentiment that has grown with unexampled rapidity and is now spread over that immense extent of densely populated land is race prejudice, hatred of the Europeans.

It is not my intention to trace the formation of the European concessions in China. These are closely connected with the action, in political or colonial expansion, of the respective Powers, especially after the Japanese victory, which was transformed into a Russian occupation of Port Arthur. "*Sic vos, non vobis!*" Since that day, each nation has turned towards the Yellow Sea with more lively hopes, aspirations and ambitions. Each country of Europe has ever been forced to act thus, either for economical, social, or domestic reasons ; or in defence of its own position and prestige in the world ; or for protection of commerce, of the dif-

ferent outlets required for its products and superabundant industries; and there has been the supreme necessity of preserving the balance of power on the seas, which would immediately be upset by the establishing of a powerful colonial empire on the part of one Power to the detriment of the others. All this immense concentration of political and economical, social and commercial, moral and material interests, for the securing of wider national opportunity, is summarized in history, from the British conquest of India to our days. France, the epic dream of Napoleon having become a thing of the past, is, although a Republic, organizing with dogged perseverance a colonial empire. The other Powers, which, on account of the Napoleonic arrogance, could do little in the first quarter of the century, endeavored, as soon as the period of restoration had come, to conquer territory and influence in the most distant regions of the world; the last example being the United States in its conquest of the Philippines. In China, each one has, up till now, obtained by force, by cunning, by shrewdness, as much as sufficed to prevent the establishment by a rival of a possible future, exclusive supremacy. Only the weak and incapable were excluded from those concessions, being unable to claim them in time or with sufficient authority of prestige. The narrow mind of the Chinaman did not recognize in these said concessions the basis of an opportunity for reciprocal advantage in the future—the beginning of a happy transformation which might have led China from the horrible refinements of the arts of barbarism to those very different and genial ones of modern civilization.

During the long period which intervened between the eleventh century and the fifteenth, and still later, the relations between the East and West had been most regular and peaceful; but they were free from any pretence of conquest, from any tendency to disturb the religious, and, consequently, the moral, conscience of Asiatics. On the contrary, they were founded on a free and reciprocal intellectual, moral and material intercourse. The account which Marco Polo gives of the fifteen and more years passed by him in China, of the many important offices and confidential missions entrusted to him, affords conclusive proof that the Chinese in those times exercised tolerance towards Europeans.

The objects of intercourse being changed, the nature of the relationship became modified also. The first difficulty was the

rise of fanaticism against the missions. The secret societies speedily took advantage of this sentiment, and the Europeans, whilst, empowered by regular concessions, they were intent on constructing railways, developing industry and setting up other productive manufactures, were slaughtered. The diplomatic and consular agents were first assaulted and then besieged; whilst the representative of the German Empire, led into an infamous trap, was barbarously murdered. Immediate intervention was indispensable; and it was also important that the necessity for this intervention should be recognized by public opinion, so that international accord might be rendered more easy. Unhappily, exaggerations and fantastic inventions were not wanting on the part of the press. Descriptions and horrible details of slaughter and torture were published, which had, fortunately, never taken place. I do not approve of this kind of journalistic imposition on public credulity; but I recognize, in a spirit of impartiality, that it prevented the home opponents of some of the Powers from starting a movement intent on misrepresenting the purpose of the intervention, and from pretending that it was a colossal enterprise for conquest, a whimsical and arrogant colonial adventure.

It may be as well to state clearly and accurately the considerations on which the decision for the collective action of the Powers was based. These were the re-establishment of order, as it was impossible for the civilized world to look on unmoved at such a gigantic revolution; the severe and exemplary punishment of the bloodthirsty insults offered to the representatives of the Powers; the rehabilitation of each of the separate Powers in those rights which the violated concessions recognized as respectively theirs, and the securing of a real guarantee that the horrible deeds of cruelty should never happen again in the future; the guarantee of effective protection for the religious missions, of all creeds and all nationalities; the establishing of an orderly government, that would honestly co-operate in the application of the measures proposed; the obliging of this government to maintain normal and peaceable relations with the civilized Powers, through their diplomatic, consular and military representatives.

These different objects, then, constituted a common programme; though the indemnities and compensations to be demanded by the several Powers, individually, might differ in degree.

The right and justice of the cause were so evident that all the Powers joined it. It may be said that, for once only, diplomacy based on reasons of state yielded the path to sentiment. A ray of idealism was lighting up the not always disinterested movements of European Cabinets. And we saw troops embarking at every port, under every flag, amidst the enthusiastic cheers and good wishes of every one. More significant example was never imagined of what would be the course of affairs in that grand Utopia, the United States of Europe. Never was so gigantic a stride taken towards universal brotherhood—a brotherhood which is nothing else, for the present at least, but a rhetorical figure in the declamations of socialistic and anarchical orators, who, preaching the struggle of class against class, confirm the ancient aphorism, "*Homo homini lupus!*"

The march to the front was rapid, the incidents of little or no importance, the victims, happily, few. The enemy beats a hurried retreat. The discipline, the accord of the international combatants, the perfection of their arms, but increase the terror, and soon the road is clear. Peking is occupied, the legations relieved and their occupants set free. But the revolt and the massacres still rage in the Tartar cities; all reliable news is wanting; it is not known whether the Emperor is dead or alive, if the Empress has taken flight and where, if the rebel Prince has made himself the jailer of the imperial family, or if he himself is a prisoner, and of whom. In the meantime other troops, and in larger numbers, and inured to war, are landed at Taku, where they greet the arrival of the commander-in-chief, proposed by Germany and accepted, under more or less restrictive conditions, by all the Powers, in the person of Field Marshal von Waldersee.

Whilst diplomacy and the troops are sharpening their weapons, these observations of mine will be on their way across the ocean. I will then spare myself the ungrateful task of the prophet; so much the more as, in such a serious and complicated question, the most unexpected incidents might give the lie to the most reasonable hypothesis. I will, instead, consider the great problem itself, and under the aspect which interests me the most.

China is a huge market; the 450 millions of inhabitants that populate its immense territory render this, whilst it is more extensive, also more thickly populated than Europe. Japan, with

a population which stands in the proportion of one to ten compared with the Chinese, has nearly the same value of commerce; in 1899 it amounted to 225 millions of dollars, whilst China succeeded with difficulty in reaching 233 millions. This comparison will suffice to show that the Far East is a real and wealthy mine, still almost unexplored for the purposes of commerce, investment of capital and production.

If, up till now, England has enjoyed the greater part of this commerce, we must not forget that the commercial question tends always, more and more, to become mixed up with the political. China might flatter herself that she is impreguably defended by her great wall; but now England is gradually working her way into the very heart of the Celestial Empire, and stretching out her claws towards the South, with concessions in the territory opposite Hong-Kong, and she has occupied Wei-hai-wei; whilst she had already succeeded in having the frontier of Upper Burma rectified, in acquiring the right to navigate on the Yangtse, and in securing the opening of three new ports, which placed the whole commerce of Kwang-Si in her hands, with the right to send consuls into Yun-nan and to unite the railways and telegraph lines of Eastern India with those of China.

On the north there is Russia, whose position it would be as well to examine at length. Russia having occupied part of Manchuria, the Russian-Chinese frontiers extend coterminously over more than 4,000 miles. The Trans-Siberian railway, the construction of which has been pushed on with alacrity, for obvious military purposes, is already, for the greater part, open for traffic—that is to say, along the extensive stretch from Samara to Stretensk, and, on another piece from the Sea of Japan (Vladivostock) to Khabarovka. When the line now in construction from Stretensk to Khabarovka is completed, all the northern part of Manchuria will be protected by that line, which will render a rapid mobilization of troops a very easy matter; and when the branch line from the Onon River to Peking and to Port Arthur is open to the public, the possession of Manchuria will be made sure, whilst Mongolia will always be threatened. It is no longer a matter, then, of saying that Russia is aiming only at the defence of her frontiers; it appears evident, instead, that the Muscovite Empire tends towards acquiring a preponderating position, in view of events which have perhaps already been brought to a head.



Germany has put down a firm foot in the province of Shan-tung, and France has insured herself a nice little bit to the south.

Another actor on the stage which must be taken into account is Japan; in possession of Formosa by right of conquest, she threatens to take the province of Fo-kien. This province, so modest in appearance, geographically speaking, has been an enemy to China for centuries. Whilst Fo-kien is an essentially agricultural country, Japan is chiefly military. In China, the cultivator of the soil is obliged to gather two immense harvests of rice every year to feed such an enormous population. Japan, instead, possesses untold mineral treasures, and her mines are admirably well worked; so that not only do they provide wealth, but they render the land independent of Europe as regards implements either for peace or war.

Finally, we come to the United States of America, that already had many important interests in China, chiefly commercial, and which, after having wrested the Philippine Islands from Spain, after having, by the occupation of the Sandwich Islands and (together with Germany) of the Archipelago of Samoa, marked out, so to say, the extremities of a line between their Far West and the Asiatic Far East, have also taken up arms and intervened in the present conflict to such an extent as to legitimately entitle them to some kind of real compensation.

The intervention of the United States reveals another aspect of the future. For, if Russia intends to pass over from Manchuria and occupy Mongolia; if England intends to claim the expansion of her sphere of influence over all the Yangtse Valley (with 177 millions of Chinese population); if Germany gradually spreads herself over all the peninsula of Shan-tung—three suppositions that might be safely made by any one who has followed the development of European occupations in China during recent years—the great highway of the Atlantic, now preponderating, not to say exclusive, as regards commerce and international relations, will lose its value in comparison to that of the Pacific Ocean. This immense sea, put into communication with the Atlantic by the Nicaragua Canal, leads to a world which was, up till now, if not unknown, certainly neglected; from the coasts of China and Japan to those of California and the neighboring Rocky Mountains, across Australia and the thousands of enchanted islands constituting Polynesia.

Ocean cables are already quietly being prepared; the German press has already pointed out that the acquisition of the Caroline Islands, of the Palaos and the Marianne, must be considered as a bridge thrown between the other German possessions, Kiao-chou and New Guinea. The populations living on the coasts of the Pacific amount to 878 millions—that is to say, 100 millions more than the half of the entire population of the world, according to the latest calculations.

Senator Seward made the statement, as long ago as 1868, in the Senate of the United States, that the Pacific Ocean, its shores, islands, and the coasts washed by its waves, will in future be the principal stage on which the events of the world will be played out. It seems to me that the Senator's prophecy is about to be accomplished.

So far I have purposely said nothing regarding France and Italy. They are the two greatest Catholic nations in Europe, if we take into account the reserve which Austria-Hungary has maintained in foreign politics for several years; and the massacre of the missionaries enjoins upon them duties equal to those which Germany has asserted for herself in consequence of the assassination of her diplomatic representative. The right to intervene is confirmed by the treaty of Berlin of July 13th, 1878, by which treaty each nation has the right to protect its missionaries abroad. The fifty-second clause of this treaty imposes, moreover, much wider and more pressing duties on France. France cannot renounce that of which she has always boasted as a privilege. The exercising of this right dates from a remote past. We find it one with the sceptre of the Kings of France; we see it constantly reconfirmed; and, after the Crimean War, we find it extended even where it was not justified in penetrating and where it ought not to have forced itself, thanks to the persevering and most zealous work of the missionaries, who, instead of being instruments for the spreading of Christian charity and civilization, are far more frequently diplomatic wielders of political influence. This work of slow but continual expansion came more easily to France because of a circumstance which it is important to record.

All know that the Institute *De Propaganda Fide* sends a large number of missionaries to the East; but all do not know that this Institute has a powerful organization in Lyons, where the liberty conceded to it by the Vatican and the assured protection of the

French Government have ended by gaining extraordinary political power for the *Propaganda* work. It happens, consequently, that, whilst the religious missions sent from France to the most distant lands preserve a marked national character, those organized by other nations absorb outside elements, and each such mission thus loses the character of the place of its origin, so that the influence resulting from its work cannot be attributed to one State rather than another. It is true, however, that France has not always fulfilled her duty as protector of the Christians in the East; and still we have a vivid remembrance of the horror felt at the massacres of the Armenians, against which every civilized being raised a cry of shame; but the horror at these cruel persecutions was equalled by the regret felt that France both should and could have forgotten the task assigned to her by history and tradition, and so jealously claimed by her at Berlin in 1878. The fact was naturally followed by its consequences; because the Christians, subjects of the Sultan, finding themselves abandoned by those who, they considered, ought to have quickly intervened for their protection, turned round and concentrated, so to say, all their hopes on Russia. If, at the present moment, France were to repeat the same error, would Russia subordinate to this unasked-for protection her own private aims in the far East?

With regard to Italy, the duty owing to humanity has justified her intervention in China. Italy cannot boast that she has commercial interests to protect there. In Chinese commerce, Italy not only comes after Germany, Japan, Russia, France and the United States, but is left a long way behind by Denmark, Sweden, and Holland. Italy's intervention is dictated by the obligations of civilization, humanity, and the protection of Italians, be they laymen or missionaries. And the points of the programme common to all the other Powers, already mentioned, are those that Italy has equally the right to see carried out.

Europe has not as yet re-established order, has not punished the offenders, has not set up a regular government, has not restored in deed and right the possessions violated by the rebels. For the present, we have still to discuss the preliminaries of peace. This interlude may be useful, as it will give time to the other international forces, still on the way out, to reach China; and the conditions of peace will be dictated with more effectual security if supported by an imposing array of troops.

But, without making any forecasts, may I be allowed to express the hope that the harmony reigning between the great Powers may survive this hard trial? It is necessary for all of them to understand the danger of dissension, which might (God forbid the supposition, even!) transfer the war from the land of the barbarians to civilized countries. China cannot be considered as the booty of war to be divided. If this were the case, the cause of civilization would disappear and the rights of conquest, sad survivals of the Middle Ages, would get the upper hand. China must, instead, become, as I have already said, a market open to progress, science, art, industry; to all, in fact, of the most genial and beneficent manifestations of human activity. China must cast off the garment of the barbarian, worn for centuries, and be clothed anew, since new times, new wants of humanity are knocking loudly at her doors; and, united to the other Powers, she also will be, when the time comes, an instrument of civilization. Europe will not be repaid for her present action and the sacrifices it will necessitate by war indemnity or concessions of territory alone. But the opening of the largest market the world has ever known will be the certain means whereby all may harvest wealth in a future which the work of men and their governments will endeavor, in their own interests, to bring about as soon as possible. This accord will be rendered surer and firmer if the long, laborious and most difficult diplomatic work which lies before us be conducted in a spirit of moderation. One thing is certain, and that is that each nation must receive a reward in proportion to the sacrifices it has made. The weak, or those who for political reasons have shown themselves such, the avaricious and the incapable, will not have the right to complain when all is over; because, in politics as well as in agriculture, the mother of all doctrines and all examples, the harvest does not only depend upon the skill of the laborer in the field, but upon the quantity and the quality of the seed sown.

But the claims of justice must not be forgotten. It is impossible to deviate from the objects in which the intervention originated; to withdraw without having accomplished those objects satisfactorily would be such an evident proof of incapability that the cause of civilization could not hope, for many long years to come, to triumph in the far East.

Among the European Powers now in China, the one which

shows, for the moment, the greatest firmness, the strongest will, is Germany; because, aside from her strong impulse toward colonial expansion, she knows exactly what satisfaction she intends to get for the bloodthirsty insult she received. The treacherous assassination of a diplomatic representative cannot remain unpunished. "Wherever there is an Englishman, there is England," was said at the time of England's greatest colonial conquests.

William II. has used far more decided and severe language than this. He is a man of iron will and of noble feeling; and the powerful nation which, in such a short space of time, has risen to such power is with him, heart and soul. Of one thing we may feel sure; and that is that the subtle windings of diplomacy will not bend the German Empire to unforeseen and unbefitting renunciations.

Among the mementoes of the good will of the German Emperor, I have here before me his portrait, underneath which he wrote: "*A gentilhomme, gentilhomme; à corsaire, corsaire et demi.*"

That is the motto, that the programme, of this powerful sovereign. And after the insult offered in Peking to his country, he will rigidly carry that programme out. Of that I feel convinced.

F. CRISPI.